

This trash should be the easiest thing in the world for every person in a leadership position to call out. But perhaps—perhaps—because Israel has become a strangely controversial issue on the far left, the condemnations do not seem to be flowing quite as easily and unequivocally as they should.

Yesterday, a Democratic Congressman from Minnesota tweeted this:

I'll say the quiet part out loud. It's time for "progressives" to start condemning anti-Semitism and violent attacks on Jewish people with the same intention and vigor demonstrated in other areas of activism. The silence has been deafening.

I couldn't say it better myself.

So Senator COTTON and I are introducing new legislation to fight anti-Semitism. Our bill will support State and local law enforcement and ensure the bigoted thugs who are attacking Jewish Americans face the full force of our justice system.

I am proud to be cosponsoring this legislation, although I regret that in the year of 2021, it remains, unfortunately, necessary. I hope every one of our colleagues will join Senator COTTON and myself.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, now on one final matter, the President's decision to retreat from Afghanistan is not clear-eyed or strategic; it is dangerous, wishful thinking.

As discussions with the administration are making clear, this decision is not underpinned by a coherent plan to mitigate the geopolitical and humanitarian risks that our departure will create.

When we are gone, after we leave, there is every reason to believe al-Qaida will regroup in its historic safe haven. Giving up the high ground while the enemy is still on the battlefield isn't a strategic move. Neither is banking on conducting so-called "over the horizon" counterterrorism missions without presence on the ground. If we have learned anything in the fight against terrorists, it is the importance of reliable access and local partnerships. Give up the former, and we likely lose the latter.

The military currently flies both reconnaissance and strike missions against terrorists from within Afghanistan. The country is not easy to get to. Its immediate neighbors are Iran, Pakistan, and Russian-influenced Central Asian nations. They aren't exactly likely to let us base significant counterterrorism units in their countries. So where will we be basing these forces? How will we maintain sorties from thousands of miles away? How many forces will be required to secure our Embassy? If a pro-Taliban mob threatens to overrun it, what will we do to protect it? Where will a quick-reaction force be based if not in Afghanistan? Will it be quick if its response time goes from minutes to hours? We learned from Benghazi the so-called

tyranny of distance. If the Taliban takes Kabul, will the Biden administration recognize it as the legitimate government of Afghanistan? Will we shutter our Embassy and our aid programs? The reality is, they don't know. They can't say. There is no plan.

It is not courageous to abandon our allies. That is a view many Democrats said they held when the last President considered withdrawing from Syria and Afghanistan. But now, as Afghans, especially women and girls, face even worse dangers, many Democrats have suddenly become much less vocal. The horrific—horrible—reports of the Taliban beginning to reimpose their version of sharia law are just a taste of the catastrophes facing our friends in Afghanistan who have borne the brunt of the fight. Human rights. Women's rights. Counterterrorism refugee flows. As far as I can tell, the administration has no plan.

But the world is watching—allies and adversaries. Democrats can dress up this decision in flowery language, but the world will see it for what it is: retreating from the fight, abandoning our partners.

This is the President's decision. He chose precipitous withdrawal from Afghanistan. Unbelievably, he even chose the anniversary of September 11 as the deadline. As his team belatedly confronts him with the risks and the consequences of this decision, I hope the President will think again and reconsider.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, of Virginia, to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as if in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, when I listened to the speech by Senator

MCCONNELL, the Republican leader, about Afghanistan, it transported me back in history to October of 2002, when I was a U.S. Senator representing the State of Illinois, just days away from a reelection campaign, and we faced a historic vote here in the U.S. Senate. The vote was whether or not we would invade Iraq; whether the United States would give the President the authority to send American forces to Iraq. There were 23 votes against that invasion. I was 1 of them, 22 Democrats and 1 Republican.

I can remember that night so well. It was late, past midnight, when the vote was finally taken. But we had previously taken another vote, and although I had voted against the invasion of Iraq, I saw the invasion of Afghanistan as a different story. We believed that Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida, responsible for 9/11, were in Afghanistan. And the story was—the story line, and I bought it completely—if we don't tell people like Osama bin Laden that there is a price to pay for attacking America and killing 3,000 innocent people, who are we, and who will be the next attacker?

So I voted. I voted for the invasion of Afghanistan and believed that was the right thing to do at that moment in history. That vote passed unanimously here in the Senate. There was only one dissenting vote in the House of Representatives, Congresswoman BARBARA LEE of California. Virtually everyone else—everyone else, both political parties—voted for the invasion of Afghanistan.

I will tell you, there was not a single Senator or Congressman who would have stood up that evening on that vote and announced "I am prepared to vote for the longest war in American history," because that is what we ended up voting for.

It was our belief that if we came into Afghanistan, we could stop using this country as a haven for terrorism and we could help escort them into the 21st century.

Well, after 20 years, after thousands of Americans gave their lives and thousands more were critically injured, after the spending of trillions of dollars in Afghanistan, we learned a bitter lesson. Our willingness was not enough. The people in Afghanistan have to be prepared to embrace change for it to happen.

We had to create an army in Afghanistan, a security force. It virtually didn't exist. The warlords had their military, and they were for sale, usually, to the highest bidder. And we were trying to create a national security force. We were trying to create a nation, which was quite a challenge.

I am not going to dwell on what happened, the bitter disappointments. But when I hear Senators come to the floor saying, "Isn't it a shame that we are leaving Afghanistan? They are going to descend into chaos and many, many problems," my question to them is: So what would you have us do? Continue